

- C¹
- a) the packs (10) are transportable cyclically along a straight conveying path in a plurality of pack rows (22, 23) arranged one above the other,
 - b) a first region of the conveying path (28, 29) comprises a sealing station (25) with sealing jaws (30, 31) arranged at either side of the conveying path (28, 29) for sealing laterally directed folding tabs, and
 - c) the sealing station (25) is followed in the region of the conveying path (28, 29) by a shrinking station (26) for shrinking the outer wrapper (13) through the application of heat, wherein the shrinking station (26) comprises heating plates (32, 33) which are movable against at least one side of the packs (10) for transmitting heat to the packs (10).

²/₄ (Twice amended) Apparatus according to Claim ¹/₃, characterized in that the heating plates (32, 33) are movable against an upwardly directed front side of the packs (10).

C² ⁴/₈ (Amended) Apparatus according to claim ²/₇, characterized by the following features:

- a) during transport along a horizontal conveying path (28, 29), the packs (10) of a top pack row (22) are conveyed in the upward direction such that the packs (10) of the top pack row (22) are conveyed over a bottom heating plate (33) assigned to the packs (10) of a bottom pack row (23),
- b) the bottom heating plate (33) has an obliquely directed run-on surface (40) for the packs (10) of the top pack row (22),
- c) the run-on surface (40) extends across the full transverse extent of the packs (10), and
- d) the run-on surface (40) has an oblique edge (47) as a boundary.

5/ (Amended) Apparatus according to Claim ⁴ 6, characterized in that a pack (10) of the top pack row (22) in a position before it runs onto the bottom heating plate (33) in each case is displaced in a transverse direction onto a laterally arranged ramp (43), and in that, in a further conveying cycle, the pack (10) resting with one side on the ramp (43) is pushed onto the bottom heating plate (33) with a simultaneous sideways-directed return movement into a starting position.

6/ (Amended) Apparatus according to Claim ⁴ 7, characterized in that the heating plates (32,33) are moved up and down together such that, during advancement of the packs (10), the heating plates (32,33) are raised from the packs (10) a top pack row (22) and of the bottom pack row (23).

C² 7/ (Amended) Apparatus according to Claim ⁶ 7, characterized in that the heating plates (32, 33) are connected to one another by pressure-exerting elements comprising lowering springs (51) and lifting springs (52) for the bottom heating plate (33), the lowering springs (51) and lifting springs (52) being positioned such that, during an upward movement of a top heating plate (32), the bottom heating plate (33) is raised by the lifting springs (52).

8/ (Amended) Apparatus according to Claim ⁶ 9, characterized in that a top heating plate (32) is lowered by a transversely movable actuating mechanism with transversely movable actuating levers (53, 54) having wedge surfaces (56) which, via supporting rollers (57) connected to the top heating plate (32), raise the top heating plate (32) counter to the loading of pressing-down elements comprising compression springs (49).

9/ (Amended) Apparatus according to Claim ¹ 10, characterized in that the heating plates (32, 33) have heating elements (71) which have heat-transmitting elements including very thin metal plates (72)

which react immediately to changes in temperature, the packs (10) coming into abutment against the same or being moved past the same at a small distance therefrom.

¹⁰
~~11~~ (Amended) Apparatus according to Claim ⁹~~10~~, characterized in that the heating elements (71) have ~~sheet-like~~ heating members comprising electrical heating wires (73) which are arranged in loops or in meandering form and, on a side directed away from the packs (10), are connected to the metal plates (72) via a heat-conducting intermediate layer including a mat (74) made of silicone.

¹³
~~12~~ (Amended) Apparatus according to Claim ⁹~~10~~, characterized in that the heating elements (71) are of multilayered construction, with heating wires (73), on the one hand, and a temperature sensor (76), on the other hand, being positioned between a plurality of mats (74, 75, 77), and the metal plates (72) and mats (74, 75, 77) are connected to one another to form a unit by adhesive bonding or vulcanization.

¹⁴
~~13~~ (Amended) Apparatus according to Claim ¹³~~12~~, characterized in that a unit-design heating element (71) is positioned within a recess (70) of each heating plate (32, 33) by way of a moldable embedding compound (79) made of silicone.

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~~14~~ (Twice amended) Apparatus according to Claim ²~~1~~, characterized by the following features:

- a) during transport along a horizontal conveying path (28, 29), the packs (10) of a top pack row (22) are conveyed in the upward direction such that the packs (10) of the top pack row (22) are conveyed over a bottom heating plate (33) assigned to the packs (10) of a bottom pack row (23),
- b) the bottom heating plate (33) has an obliquely directed run-on surface (40) for the packs (10) of the top pack row (22),

- c³
- c) the run-on surface (40) extends across the full transverse extent of the packs (10), and
 - d) the run-on surface (40) has an oblique edge (47) as a boundary.

c⁴

~~15~~¹¹ (Amended) Apparatus according to Claim ~~11~~¹⁰, characterized in that the heating elements (71) are of multilayered construction, with heating wires (73), on the one hand, and a temperature sensor (76), on the other hand, being positioned between a plurality of mats (74, 75, 77), and the metal plates (72) and mats (74, 75, 77) are connected to one another to form a unit by adhesive bonding or vulcanization.

~~16~~¹² (Amended) Apparatus according to Claim ~~18~~¹¹, characterized in that a unit-design heating element (71) is positioned within a recess (70) of each heating plate (32, 33) by way of a moldable embedding compound (79) made of silicone.

REMARKS

Claims 3-16, all of the claims in the present application, have been amended in response to the Examiner's telephone request on September 24, 2002, pointing out numerous instances of claim language he believed was not in compliance with 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph.

The attached Appendix shows the text added to the claims underlined and the deleted text placed in brackets.

The applicants have endeavored to change all claim language to which the Examiner's comments might be applicable. If the Examiner believes that any additional claim language requires amendment, he is urged to telephone the applicants' undersigned attorney at 609-921-8660.